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News



Riyadh To Close Charities Overseas

By Fawaz Mohammad, IOL Correspondent

RIYADH, March 29 (IslamOnline.net) – Saudi Arabia is set to close all charities and relief organizations outside the kingdom and place their funds and properties under the control of a newly established governmental body, well-placed Saudi sources revealed Sunday, March 28.

Among the targeted organizations are the World Assembly of the Muslim Youth (WAMY), the Islamic Relief International, the Islamic Waqfs and the Saudi Joint Committee for the Relief of Kosovo and Chechnya (SJRC), the sources, speaking on condition not to be named, told IslamOnline.net.

The activities of the yet-to-be dismantled charities would be exclusively run by the state-run Saudi Civil Council for Relief and Charity Work Overseas, which was set up last month by a royal decree by King Fahd.

The sources said the Saudi move is expected to have a domino effect on some 100 charities worldwide.

The new body would announce its statutes and modus operandi as soon as the procedures of its establishment are completed.

It will be run by a group of Saudi "citizens involved in charity work and renowned for their experience, integrity and good reputation", according to the royal decree.

WAMY Secretary General Salih Al-Wehabi told IOL that a Saudi ministerial committee has been already set up to put the royal decree into effect, voicing concerns about the consequences of the king's behest.

Licensed Charities

Some of the targeted charities have been established by Saudi royal decrees and chaired by ministers and senior officials.

Wehabi hoped that the activities of the licensed charities, like WAMY and the Islamic Relief, would not be restricted and melted into the new body.

Wehabi said the new body should work in tandem with the licensed Saudi charities, while other non-official organizations should work under its umbrella.

Established in Saudi Arabia in 1972 by a royal decree, WAMY is an



Some of targeted charities have been established by royal decrees

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independent international organization and a member of the United Nations NGOs.

WAMY's headquarters are based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It also has presence in 55 countries and an associate membership of over 500 youth organizations around the world. Its budget for the FY 2002/03 stood at 175 million Saudi Rials.

Analysts believe the kingdom has yielded to Washington, which has been laying huge pressures on Arab and Islamic countries, particularly Saudi Arabia to regulate charity operations, claiming that funds usually end up in the hands of "terrorists."

The kingdom decided last December [to shut down](#) Islamic affairs divisions in all Saudi embassies around the world.

In January 2004, four branches of the Saudi Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation -- in Indonesia, Kenya, Tanzania and Pakistan -- were added to a U.S. list of groups and individuals suspected of bankrolling "terrorism", effectively freezing any assets they hold in the United States.

In August 2003, U.S. President George Bush [froze the assets](#) of five pro-Palestinians charities abroad, depriving Palestinian orphans of their much-needed aid.

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